

TYPICAL – BUT SMALLER -- BILL DELUGE AT INTRODUCTION DEADLINE

True to form, the members of the California State Legislature waited until the last minute to introduce the vast majority of their bills in the second year of the 2003-04 Legislative Session.

The holiday-shortened, four-day week prior to the February 20 deadline for introduction of bills saw almost 1600 measures “put across the desk” (legislative parlance for “introduced”), with the numbers virtually doubling each day from 102 on Tuesday to 811 on Friday.

The more than 1570 bills (not including resolutions) introduced in the final week amounted to 78% of all the bills introduced in 2004 – a record percentage.

Even more intriguing than the late introduction of bills is the extraordinarily high percentage of “spot” bills introduced – i.e., bills that make a “technical, non-substantive change in the law” or which express “the intent of the Legislature” to enact substantive law somewhere down the road. Although no records are kept of such things, the dozens of “spot” bills introduced this year clearly seem to be an all-time record.

Even with all those “spot” bills, however – and even assuming that a couple of hundred more bills may be introduced after the deadline, either as committee bills, urgency measures, or with the permission of the Assembly Speaker or Senate Rules Committee, respectively -- the total number of bills introduced this session almost certainly will be well below the 2001-02 session. That session saw 5,559 substantive measures introduced in the regular session and three special sessions. So far, the 2003-04 session and five special sessions has produced only 4,988.

The bills introduced this week will be eligible for hearing the week of Monday, March 22.

STATE BAR FEE BILL INTRODUCED BY SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

At the request of committee chair [Martha Escutia](#) (D-Whittier), this year’s bill to continue the State Bar’s funding authority has been introduced as a Senate Judiciary Committee bill. In addition to Escutia, the measure ([SB 1490](#)) includes as joint authors the four Democratic members of the



committee: [Gil Cedillo](#) (D-Los Angeles), [Denise Moreno Ducheny](#) (D-San Diego); [Sheila Kuehl](#) (D-Santa Monica); and [Byron Sher](#) (D-Stanford).

The committee's two Republican members, Vice-Chair [Bill Morrow](#) (R-Oceanside) and [Dick Ackerman](#) (R-Irvine), declined to be added as authors due to their belief that “committee” bills should be completely non-controversial (some ‘No’ votes were cast against last year’s fee bill, [AB 1708](#) by the Assm. Judiciary Committee). Neither Morrow nor Ackerman said he opposed SB 1490, which as introduced would extend the Bar’s authority to collect fees from the state’s lawyers at the current level.

STATE BUDGET HEARINGS

The initial steps toward development of the 2004-05 state budget will begin within the next few weeks when Senate and Assembly budget subcommittees hold the first of many hearings necessary to iron out a balanced spending plan.

Budget subcommittee staffers have begun the process of assembling details about the operations and funding of the agencies, departments, boards and commissions funded from state coffers. This year’s process likely will be both contentious and difficult because the state is facing a double-digit deficit. The process could become even more unwieldy if the \$15 billion bond measure on the March 2 ballot ([Proposition 57](#)) fails to win approval of the voters.

The ritual of budget subcommittee hearings begins in earnest with the release of the Legislative Analyst’s “[Analysis of the State Budget](#),” which was distributed to lawmakers on Wednesday. To some degree, the analysis serves as the road map for budget hearings because its recommendations tend to highlight potential changes to budget proposals put forth by the governor.

The hearings take place over a three-month period, typically ending sometime shortly after the governor releases his “Revision to the State Budget,” commonly referred to as the May Revise, in the middle of that month. The May Revise contains updated revenue and expenditure estimates for those programs and entities where changes have occurred since the release of the governor’s January budget proposal. The updated estimates are used by the budget subcommittees to “fine tune” their previous actions or finalize actions left incomplete pending receipt of revised estimates.